6: Honigmann E-5 (1943-1945)1954 ND12 Nahane ND12
Upper Liard

Coast Range. Even in 1945 mild hostility characterized Tahltan-Kaska relations and young men of the former group boasted of their ancestors successfully fighting the Kaska. Other informants corroborated the fact of war between the two groups. Nobody recalled trouble with the Bear Lake Sekani. The upper Liard River people regarded the Etca'otena of the Fort Nelson River as stupid and almost inhuman but fighting with them could not be recalled.[10]

Large-scale aggression did not occur frequently and there existed no value on fighting for its own sake. War was defensive in theory, a means of subduing bad or potentially dangerous people. Woman felt dismay when preparations for hostility began and some sought, with only rare success, to keep their men from battle. Both sexes equally welcomed the resumption of peace. Typically a war party originated in a situation like the following: A man, visiting the camp of a stranger, saw a scalp which he suspected belonged to one of his relatives. The traveler returned to his own country and discovered who was missing. If several people had not been heard of for a long time the original surmise became fact. Driven by anger, the man began hostilities by killing a woman who had originally belonged to the enemy group. In front of his companions he displayed a knife, blade uppermost, and moved it in a semicircle as a gesture of hostility. "I'm still hungry," he would say. Then those people prepared to attack the enemy. The desire to steal women took its place alongside revenge as an auxiliary motive for aggression. The wish for prestige played little part in promoting aboriginal warfare.

A war leader was not identical with the band's headman. Sometimes the expedition also included a shaman who worked sorcery against the enemy. While the war chief acted as "boss" of the war party he had no power to inflict corporal punishment. At most he could order a disobedient member to quit the group. Several microcosmic groups probably provided recruits for a military expedition, so that the leader assumed the proportions of a true political authority. The expedition itself contained two divisions, young men about 19 or 20 years old, who packed the goods, and warriors, averaging about 30 years of age, who did the actual fighting. Women never directly participated in aggressive warfare but they sometimes visited the enemy camp to act as spies. Such an envoy might return to tearfully beg that the intended victims be spared.

Preparatory to fighting men made new knives, lances, fitted with stone or caribou horn blades, and many arrows. Each warrior provided himself with two bows in the event that one should break. In addition the men donned bear skin armor in the form of a sleeveless coat that reached to the knees. This was made from hides tanned with the hair on and worn with the hair out. Magical significance is probable, since among the Indians the bear enjoyed a reputation for his fierceness. Over his head the warrior carried, fur exposed, a caribou-skin helmet lined with birch bark. Sometimes headgear included a visor covering the whole face and provided with holes for vision.[11] Helmets

[10] *For counter attitudes among the Slave, see* Honigmann, *Ethnography and Acculturation of the Fort Nelson Slave* (1946), 73–75.

[11] Tlingit armor consisted of long tunics made with two or three thicknesses of hide or hide reinforced with wooden slats. Twined-rod jackets were used by the Chilkat and helmets of solid wood with visors held in the teeth. Jenness, *Indians of Canada* (1932), 330; Drucker, *Culture Element Distributions: XXVI, Northwest Coast* (1950), 187.

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furnished disguise because they prevented the enemy from recognizing the attackers. Painting the whole face with a mixture of charcoal, spruce gum, and grease served the same end.[83] After the fighting this paint was removed with the aid of grease. Birch-wood shields, designed to deflect arrows, consisted of two or three pieces of wood, each about three feet long and sewn together. Grease layered the forward surface of the shield. In warding off an arrow by this device the warrior spoke a one-word charm, ʾuk ("swan"). Menstruation on the part of a man's wife did not prevent him from joining a fighting party but following his departure this woman was bound to avoid crossing the warrior's trail lest danger befall him. Prior to setting out a man abstained from coitus for four days. "If you stay with your wife you will be ki'...i, you weaken yourself."[84] Winter or summer each member of a war expedition toughened himself by plunging into cold water.

After the men had departed the women left in camp constructed a number of human images, using robes and skins stuffed with brush. Human features were added with red paint. The dummies stood in the camp and each morning women attacked them with ceremonial wooden knives. The ritual gave additional strength to the warriors.[85] Women also girdled themselves in fancy outer belts which dared not be removed until the party had returned. Untying the knot promised death to the fighters. This belt undoubtedly symbolizes the chastity of the women during the husbands' absence.[86] At the same time the rite no doubt allayed the jealous temperament of the men and allowed them to focus on the business at hand without distraction. It may well be that such belts possessed indirect survival value.

The warriors traveled quickly. In advance went two or three scouts, intelligent men about 40 years old. At night young men remained posted around the camp, acting as sentries. The expedition camped in brush-banked lean-tos enclosed on three sides and sharing a common rear wall. Usually two lines of such shelters faced each other and a fire burned in the space between. Moccasins dared never be removed while sleeping lest the wearer imperil his life. No effort was made to conceal the light of campfires. Frequently during the course of travel the shaman performed rites designed to prevent bow strings from snapping or to break the enemy's snowshoes when the latter sought to escape. At night the fighting party sang songs magically designed to weaken the enemy.

All military action took place on land. The Kaska did not fight from canoes, although the informant had heard that the Tlingit fought from boats. Fighting started as soon as

[84] The same means of disguise accompanied war among the Kutchin. Osgood, *Contributions to the Ethnography of the Kutchin* (1936), 87.

[85] Tlingit men expecting to join a war party "were not allowed to see or go to any woman. This taboo depended on the length of time they expected to be gone. 'Sometimes they did not see a woman for a year.'" Swanton, *Social Condition, Beliefs and Linguistic Relationship of the Tlingit Indians* (1908), 449.

[86] Tlingit warriors constructed such dummies before leaving camp. "All the men and their wives had such images." Swanton, *Social Condition, Beliefs and Linguistic Relationship of the Tlingit Indians* (1908), 449.

[86] "While the warriors were away the leader's wife had to have stones tied about her blanket just as did her husband on the expedition. . . ." Swanton, *Social Condition, Beliefs and Linguistic Relationship of the Tlingit Indians* (1908), 450.